

THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

FORMERLY "THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT"
OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE A.A.L.

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THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

Official Journal of the Association of Assistant Librarians

(Section of the Library Association)

Edited by A. C. Jones, Hornsey Public Library

VOL. XLVI, NO. 1

JANUARY, 1953

EDITORIAL

WHEN the Library Assistants' Association became, in 1922, the Association of Assistant Librarians, no change was made in the title of its official journal. This apparent oversight was rectified by Council in September, when the decision was made to adopt the title *The Assistant Librarian*.

It seems, on the face of it, logical enough that an association which has outgrown its former style should accept a consequential amendment in that of its journal. But logic is reinforced by Council's acceptance of the view that the term "Library Assistant" is to-day hopelessly out-of-date; that it has a slightly derogatory sound, suggesting an analogy with "shop assistant" rather than with "assistant teacher" or the customary nomenclature of other cultured professions; and that every Chartered Librarian is a *librarian*, regardless of whether he is a chief or an assistant.

There was apparently no doubt in the minds of Councillors that the designation *Assistant Librarian* was infinitely preferable to *Library Assistant*. But the proposal to change the established name of our widely-known journal called for further deliberation; the claims of tradition could not be lightly set aside, in spite of our determination not to be hide-bound by them, and they were fully considered by Council before its decision was made.

Change of title represents no change in the policy of *The Assistant*. We shall continue to provide a platform for the full and free discussion of professional and related matters, concerning ourselves more with the hammering out of opinions than with the presentation of established facts; we shall prefer the outspoken and heretical above the complacent and conventional, confident that subsequent discussion will separate the wheat from the chaff; we shall continue to welcome contributions from young and as yet unqualified members, aware of the benefit we can derive from their fresh outlook on professional matters, and aware also of the benefit to them of opportunities to express their views in print. And finally, we shall continue to present "news and reviews," aiming at informative reporting and responsible criticism.

Typographical changes have not been uncommon in the fifty-four years lifetime of *The Assistant*—evidence perhaps of our vitality, and intolerance of inertia and complacency. The present change—the first for five years—is also, alas, evidence of our need to squeeze a quart of ideas into a pint pot of paper.

REMEMBER . . . Subscriptions to the Library Association are due on January 1st. Do not deprive yourself of full rights—including your voting power and your copy of *The Assistant Librarian*—by not paying promptly. And do not forget to *opt* for membership of this section.

WHERE'S THE GINGER?

by W. G. SMITH

Mr. Smith, who is an assistant at Tottenham, first came to the wider notice of the profession through his contribution to the discussion during the A.A.L. session at last year's Bournemouth Conference. He writes: "I am not, in fact, quite so revolutionary as perhaps I sounded at Bournemouth. The fact was that the discussion looked like petering out at an early stage, and I deliberately spoke in rather extreme terms to try to provoke a livelier debate. It was disappointing to find that although several chiefs jumped to the attack, there was hardly another assistant with a word to say."

In this article, again, perhaps Mr. Smith is deliberately speaking in rather extreme terms; reference to the Notes which appear later in this issue may convince readers that the Council is not so completely out of touch with the views of members as he would have us believe.

"THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING was uneventful and 'the motion' was unanimously passed." What sort of organisation can this be whose affairs are conducted so placidly and which can find only one motion to discuss at its annual business meeting? A thrift club, perhaps, or a local chess club—certainly not a large, active association. Yet the report is from this very journal and refers to our own A.A.L. meeting at Bath—that same A.A.L. which, a few weeks later at Bournemouth, was being described by our Honorary Secretary, Mr. Tynemouth, as "an antidote to complacency," and which is often referred to as a "ginger group." How a non-complacent body can possibly have an "uneventful" A.G.M. was not explained.

Evidence of the gulf that exists between the A.A.L. Council and its members was again provided at Bournemouth when Mr. Tynemouth supported the proposal to increase subscriptions. Judging by the result and by personal observation of the voting, every assistant in the hall proceeded to vote against the proposal—and against their Hon. Secretary.

This is certainly not intended as a personal attack on Mr. Tynemouth, but his two speeches at Bournemouth, when compared with the action of members both there and at Bath, show clearly that the A.A.L. Council is out of touch with the membership. The same charge may be brought against at least one of the Divisional Committees. In theory, of course, this should not be so since all our committees and the Council are elected democratically. Nevertheless, I suggest that it is a fact and that the following are some of the reasons:—

(1) Voting for election to Committees and the Council is seldom on the basis of the candidates' policies since they fail to make their policies known.

(2) When elected, Committees become engrossed in the problems of professional education with the result that the association tends to be concerned almost entirely with that side of its work.

(3) The Committees and the Council fail badly in the field of public relations. Failure to make policies and decisions known to members results in little discussion of A.A.L. activities and, therefore, an apathetic membership.

It is easy to say that the first reason is the fault of members. That is partly true but, on the other hand, candidates for election seldom take the trouble to state what their policies are. Moreover, our Divisions are often so large and unwieldy that members feel remote from their committees. The cost and the time involved in travelling to meetings is prohibitive for many assistants and such meetings are frequently held at a

A NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

What a pleasure it was as Vice-President to occupy the chair at Bournemouth in 1952 at that invigorating A.A.L. session, and later to hear the views of the young assistant at the L.A. Annual General Meeting!

In this New Year greeting, may I express the hope that the enthusiasm shown at these meetings will inspire the young as well as the not so young in years to voice their opinion at Divisional Meetings and ensure that Divisional Committees are made aware of their deficiencies and strengths. For too long the A.A.L. has depended for its strength on the more mature of its members, and these stalwarts, long-toothed in A.A.L. lore and perhaps a little prejudiced in favour of their generation, would welcome the youthful back-bencher not afraid to air and push his or her views.

You choose the Division Committee and the A.A.L. Council—be vocal in your demands upon them, be the issue subscription scales, services conditions, education, publications or any other of the many matters which intimately concern the members of our Association.

To all members, I bring the good wishes of the Council, and add to these my own personal greetings. May success attend your endeavours in the L.A. examinations or in your more general aspirations. Write to me during my year of office if you feel I can help in any way, and I will do my best to assist you. I look forward to meeting many of you at the A.A.L. session at Llandudno and where possible in your own Division.

Sheffield.

C. W. TAYLOR.

time when large numbers of them are on duty. Our unit of organisation is too large and should be based, not on the Division, but on 'sub-Divisions' consisting of the assistants of small groups of libraries situated near each other. The need for such small branches is demonstrated by the success of a number of library staff guilds which are already doing valuable work, and with which the A.A.L. should endeavour to gain some form of official liaison.

Our Association's over-emphasis on education leads to the neglect of its other functions. Education is important but the A.A.L. will never capture the enthusiasm of members on that alone. It needs to take a much greater and more active interest in working conditions and, if necessary, its constitution should be amended to allow for such activity. It should openly protest when assistants' posts are advertised at grades obviously inadequate; it should intervene in cases of particularly awkward timetables and other forms of bad conditions; it should gain a greater influence in L.A. Branches by sponsoring candidates for election; it should make itself known as the champion in the cause of improving the position of assistants everywhere.

It may be argued that much of this work should be left to NALGO. But more and more groups of NALGO members (e.g., sanitary inspectors,

parks' administrators, engineers, chief librarians) are finding that body far too large and cumbersome to deal with their particular problems and have formed separate negotiating groups. Library assistants form one of the most neglected of all the hotch-potch of professions represented by NALGO, and a similar organisation is required for them. The A.A.L. is the obvious organisation to do this work but needs to be re-organised as a negotiating body. It should be noted here that the Chief Librarians have found a separate Trade Union necessary. It will be argued that the A.A.L. is not a trade union—as if that were something to be proud of! It will be argued that this sort of thing is not sanctioned by the L.A. Charter—but let us not be too overawed by that Victorian edict which is fast becoming a shelter for the reactionaries among us.

It may be contended that the A.A.L. is already doing something towards improvement of working conditions. That may be so, but how little does the average assistant hear about it; how poor is the A.A.L.'s publicity. It seems that, once elected, the Council and Committees do not feel it necessary to inform members of their activities and invite discussion on their policies. For example, according to the *Library Assistant* for February, 1952, the A.A.L. Council discussed the Entrance Examination and "a resolution was accepted by Council for transmission to the Library Association." But what was the resolution? We are not told. Now, why this secrecy? Are we, the members, not entitled to know what our elected representatives are doing? How can the Council expect constructive criticism when we know no more than "a resolution was accepted"? Could it be that the Council considers itself above criticism? A further example of failure to publicise Council decisions occurred in connection with the Tighe report on Welfare. We are told in the *Assistant* for May, 1952, that the final draft of the report was the main business of the March Council meeting. The report has since been sent to the L.A. Yet, at the time of writing, nearly six months after the Council approved the final draft, we, the members on whose behalf the Council is acting, have not been told the contents of this important document. Surely, the membership should have been given the details *before* the report was sent to the L.A. With such an important matter as this, members should have been given the opportunity to discuss it and, in the light of their comments, the report should have been, if necessary, amended before going to the L.A.

As a tutorial body, the A.A.L. is doing a fine job but, if it is to be regarded as anything more than that by assistants, it must take them into its confidence and considerably widen the scope of its activities.

A LIVE STOCK FOR OPEN SHELVES

by L. F. HASKER, *Branch Librarian, Westminster P.L.*

I

THE YOUNG librarian taking up a senior appointment in a public library is sometimes faced with the problem of overhauling a book-stock, which for one reason or another is in a neglected condition. The suggestions outlined may help in putting into practice the knowledge of book selection theory gained during studies for the professional examinations.

The first essential is to form a clear picture of the existing book-stock. Even a brief look round the shelves is sufficient to give a librarian

an impression of the books in any library he may be studying. Is the stock dirty, or are the bindings in poor condition? Do the books seem old, or are there plenty of up-to-date works? Is the selection a live one, i.e., do the date labels show a good turnover? Does the balance between subjects appear to reflect demand. For example, will a popular subject such as radio or gardening show an adequate selection on the shelves or only an odd volume or two, while some other topic of limited interest is thoroughly represented. Little time is needed to gain a general impression, but a great deal of detailed study is vital to produce the intimate knowledge of the book-stock which the efficient book selector must possess.

For many years there has been a marked tendency in Public Libraries to reduce the number of books actually provided on the open shelves. Book stacks have been cut down in height and the lowest shelves eliminated; while in cases of reconstruction of buildings whole runs of shelving have sometimes been removed from the public departments. This has been made necessary by the big increase in borrowers, who need space to move around freely during the times when the libraries are thronged. Thus it often happens that fewer books are to be found on the open shelves, while at the same time the demand for them is greater than ever before. It therefore becomes of increasing importance that the selection of stock on the shelves should be live and attractive.

A "run-down" library will nearly always be improved by thinning-out. One symptom of neglect is insufficient withdrawing—a failure to clear the obsolete and superseded works; to modify representation of subjects where interest has waned; to withdraw little-used items; and to set a good standard of cleanliness by scrapping, and where necessary, replacing books which are physically unpleasant to handle. The exact approach to this thinning-out process will be governed by the conditions of the library. Obviously no librarian can carry through a programme for improving his book-stock without a sufficient vote of money for books and binding. Assuming this condition to be favourable, and that the book-selector has acquired a sound general acquaintance with his stock, work can begin.

A good initial method is to examine every book on the shelves with two factors in mind—cleanliness and rate of turnover. First, establish a minimum standard of cleanliness. This will vary according to the existing condition of the stock, and the number of books which it is planned to clear from the shelves. If the stock is in a dirty condition generally, it may not be possible to set more than a poor standard to begin with, but the object will be to effect some improvement by getting rid of the dirtiest of the books. The impression still lingers in the minds of many people—unfortunately sometimes with justification—that public library books are dirty. To kill this idea it is essential to develop and maintain a high standard of cleanliness.

Secondly, formulate a minimum degree of use or turnover below which a book may not justify its place on the open shelves, the long-term object here being to build up a thoroughly live stock. As with cleanliness, the application of the turnover factor must vary with individual circumstances, and this is where it is essential for the book-selector to have a good general acquaintance with his stock before starting the overhaul. In one library the initial basic approach may be to withdraw books which have not been issued for x years. In another, in better shape, it may be necessary to decide on x issues a year as the basic standard.

(To be concluded).

SOME THOUGHTS ON ELECTIONS

By

C. MURIS, *Newcastle upon Tyne P.L.*

"THE RIGHT to choose is the essence of democracy," said John Strachey, M.P., in his recent broadcast. Here we are in the middle of the election season: the nominations are in and we are being called upon to vote in order to choose the committee members and officers for the coming year. It is good, therefore, that in his November Council notes the Hon. Secretary of the A.A.L. urges us all to vote, reminding us that "the larger the poll the better each council will represent its members."

There is, however, a general feeling of uneasiness about the voting strength of the Library Association which has often been expressed but has been summed up recently in the same *Library Assistant* from which I have recently quoted. The editor declared "we should be foolish to ignore the fact that the votes of a large proportion of our younger members, if cast at all, are cast irresponsibly or under the influence of importunate and not always disinterested seniors." If this is true, and there are many indications that it is, and since a fair number of librarians on our professional register are automatically disenfranchised through being behind-hand in their subscriptions, while others do not exercise their franchise, then many of our committee men are sitting for what might well be termed "rotten boroughs." As Mr. Goldstein has shown us recently the comparison of three sets of figures can prove very interesting: the nominal strength of an association, its voting strength in terms of "paid-up members" and the number of members who actually vote.

Fortunately, for our Association, personality and not party counts for everything in elections; but unfortunately this is the real root of our troubles. We have, in our Association, few nationally known Librarians whose names are bywords even to the lowliest of juniors. Mr. X is a first-class man, well liked and respected in the south-west where he works, and he puts up for a national election. He can command nearly a 100 per cent. vote in his region where his virtues are well known; but what of the home counties and more so, what of the north? "Who's he?" is too often the question, and he will be lucky if he gets a 3 per cent. vote. To provide him with a ballot paper bearing a list of almost total strangers about who he knows nothing is merely to discourage the voter. For this reason, at the present moment, apart from our nationally-known librarians, our library school tutors (if they choose to stand) are the candidates most likely to be successful in national elections: the organisation of our library schools ensures that they have their election agents in every part of the country!

This, then, is the real problem: how are we to make the virtues of Mr. X of the south-west known in the north, and those of Mr. Y of the north known in the south-west? The candidates themselves attempt this by a wise choice of proposer and seconders but this is only a very tentative solution to the problem. The A.A.L. solution is somewhat better but the details which they give "for the guidance of voters" do not go far enough materially to assist the voter.

Our parliamentary and local government candidates overcome this difficulty of making themselves known to their electorate by writing an election address and heading it with a portrait of themselves. I believe that it is on these lines that the Library Association can solve its election

problems, at least in the case of national elections—local ones are more of a “family nature.”

For the L.A. Council elections for example, photographs of the candidates should be printed and accompanied by an election address from the candidates' proposer, giving a brief outline of his career, and saying why he thinks his choice is a man who ought to be on the Council. It is only by such means that a well-informed electorate can be created and the fear of the “well-drilled superior numbers” can be dispersed for ever. Bournemouth showed how our Council was out of touch even with the select few who managed to attend the Annual General Meeting.

By the time you read this, the results of the L.A. Council and other elections will be out; but 1953 will see a fresh crop of elections. What about it?

REVALUATIONS I

by Thomas Clearwater

THIS IS a new venture in the field of library journalism—not an over-worked pasture, and one which, from the Editor's point of view, has much to commend it. Within a small space and with general terms of reference it is possible to comment on many matters of topical and permanent interest—and there are many advantages in a pseudonym which can be assumed by other writers and in which the present contributors have no proprietary rights.

We have several examples of library journalism—J.F.W.B.'s “Off the record” in the *Librarian*, the Alexandrine Ones in the *Library World* (which also shelters A. G. S. Enser's “Topicalities”) and the rather pontifical “Notes and News” of the *Library Review*. But to us they seem to suffer from an excessive splintering of topic material and from a lack of policy leading inevitably to journalistic opportunism. There appears to be neither conscious selection of the issues to be raised nor consistent formulation of conclusions. Needless to say, these are failings we hope to avoid, mainly by confining ourselves in each issue to perhaps two or three topics arising from writings on librarianship. As our title indicates, we make no claim to originality, for we believe that a reconsideration of the values of the immediate past is called for. There is, indeed, scope for new and vital reporting such as the excellent articles in this journal by R. L. Collison on the defence by American librarians of their libraries (and themselves) against the new intolerance. On the other hand, much space is wasted in lengthy controversy over fiction provision or attempts to synthesize a philosophy with the help of the logical positivists (and presumably the dialectical materialists, too) under the shaggy umbrella of a title borrowed with minor adaptation from T. S. Eliot. A session with the bound volumes of our library periodicals would show that it has been said before and that it would have been better to reconsider the conclusions of the Snaiths, the Gardners and the Callenders before the freshness wore off a little. Or, for that matter, of the Jasts, Bakers and Browns before them. In a word, to attempt a little revaluation.

Professional Reviewing.

Discriminating reviews are essential, because library literature makes up in quantity what it lacks in quality. It is no longer sensible to say, “This book is better than nothing; I therefore recommend it.” Selection

is possible and the reviewer must advise accordingly. In a small profession the Gentle Art of making Enemies is naturally unpopular. This partly accounts for the lack of vigorous reviewing; another obstacle in this country is undoubtedly lack of space. The *Journal of Documentation* does its admirable best, but inevitably the reviews are far too late. Compare the adequate treatment of the "A.A.L. Guide to Professional Examinations," Vol. 2, by Mr. Harrison, in the current *Library Review* with the necessarily brief review in the *Library Association Record* (July, 1952).

Sometimes there are good long reviews in the latter journal, e.g., Mr. De Paris on the "Subject Index to Periodicals" (August, 1952), but these are exceptional. Has anybody seen in English library journals a serious evaluation of Aldis' "The Printed Book" (new edition) or a proper appreciation of the new edition of Mr. Seymour Smith's "English Library"? Both of these are to be found in the *Library Quarterly* (January, 1952). One has to go to the same journal for a comparison of *Library Science Abstracts* with Wilson's *Library Literature* (July, 1951).

We need, therefore, effective reviews and somewhere to place them.

Professional Books.

We shall not repeat those familiar superior dismissals of our professional books. Under the circumstances we are surprised that they are no worse. A recent American review of an English library text-book refers to "its firm grasp of the obvious, its complete mastery of the cliché; its undeviating devotion to the pedestrian and the mundane, and its superb indifference to the common rules of grammar and sentence structure." How many of our books might this describe? They order this matter somewhat better in the U.S.A., but there the approach is alien, the style diffuse, and the subject matter frequently based on sociological assumptions which we fail to share. English contributions are, therefore, required. We need, for instance, an English equivalent to Miss Haines' "Living with Books"—admirable as it is. This lack is quite astounding.

Ranganathan must be taken very seriously and not as some kind of Eastern Enid Blyton. This we shall consider in a later issue. Our concern here is with English publications. What are the remedies? The need for responsible publishing is, of course, great. At this stage there would seem to be no point in offering Messrs. Grafton our advice. We, therefore, offer none. Instead, we feel that we should urge the importance, firstly, of co-operative authorship, and secondly, of the constant revising of text-books. No one librarian (reeling between office and committee chair) can find the time properly to write or revise a book on applied bibliography or on library administration. Could not Brown's "Manual," or Mr. Harrod's "Lending Library Methods," best be brought up-to-date by teams of contributors from all over the country? This is presumably why it has taken so long to produce our promised manuals on University and Special Libraries. All that one man can do well is to produce a book on the *principles* of library administration. Likewise, works on book selection date so rapidly that loose-leaf compilations would seem to be one practical answer.

A remote alternative might be to give certain suitable librarians prolonged leave with pay on condition that they return with the required opus. (Miss Winchell, for instance, was granted a year to revise "Mudge"). We offer this plan to our library authorities and the above suggestions (more hopefully) to our colleagues.

EXAMINATION COMMENTS

The November Entrance Examination.

by R. L. COLLISON

IN THE paper on Organization and Method, candidates were asked what records of book stock—apart from the catalogue—they considered essential (Q.2). This gave them a chance not only to put the arguments for and against the accessions register, but also to point out the uses of the shelf register both for checking holdings and as an adjunct to the dictionary catalogue. A similar question, on what was considered absolutely essential to the efficient registration of borrowers (Q.5), needed the inclusion of safeguards to prevent the issue of duplicate tickets and the acceptance of defaulters, in addition to a satisfactory record for statistical purposes.

Two of the questions on Classification overlapped perhaps more than was desirable, since they both required the discussion of book arrangement from the point of view of use (QQ.1,2). In the second, in which candidates were asked to suggest methods of arrangement other than subject order (Q.2), there was an excellent opportunity to mention that form arrangement might be useful for some types of library devoted to literature, while chronological order might suit an historical library (the Goldsmith's Library of Economic Literature also uses this method). On the question of lettering or labelling shelves, the essential point to make was that whatever the system adopted, the letters or labels must be easily movable to conform with the rapid movement of book stock and to facilitate re-arrangement.

The paper on Reference Material gave candidates good opportunity to demonstrate that they knew their set

books, and to show that they were aware of the new editions of Brewer's *Dictionary* and the *World List*. One question asked candidates to make a choice between the *Britannica* and *Chambers's encyclopædia* for a small library (Q.3): a dilemma which would involve consideration of cost, revision, yearly supplements, national viewpoint, comparative length, bibliographies, binding, local preference (on account of what encyclopædias the library had possessed previously), etc. The question on reference works to be consulted in the compilation of a list of published material on atomic research during the last ten years (Q.5) reveals the limitations of those included in the set books, since not one of these would enable the assistant to sort out the wheat from the chaff. Those who mentioned the *B.N.B.* no doubt mentioned that it would only cover the last part of the period.

The Essay of five hundred words, for which one-and-a-half hours is allotted, is "intended to discover the ability of candidates to express themselves clearly, concisely and grammatically." Cannot this be discovered from the answers to the other three papers on which students have already spent four-and-a-half hours? The list of eight subjects does not include a single literary question of any kind, and such titles as "On choosing a career," "The country in which I should most like to live," "The pleasures and pains of learning a foreign language," etc., smack more of the late nineteenth- than of the mid-twentieth-century.

THOUGHT

By R.M.L.

In grey December
I can't remember—
But flaming June
Will be here soon.



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COUNCIL

TRUE to its reputation, the last Council meeting of the year (in November) proved a lively and protracted affair. Agreement, compromise and direct opposition followed and re-followed each other. There was much blowing off of steam, but no undue rise in temperature.

The first business of importance arose from A.A.L. observations to the L.A. Council about posts advertised at inadequate salaries. Further discussion confirmed the view that the only effective solution lay with librarians themselves refusing to apply for or accept posts which are under-graded.

This year's election was the next topic to come under fire. Some members regretted the earlier decision of the Council to fall in line with the Library Association and admit to the election only those whose subscriptions were not in arrears on July 1st. On the other hand, there were those amongst us who subscribed to the idea that the only way in which full rights could be maintained continuously was by the payment of the annual subscription on January 1st. As one of our elder statesmen said, "We have not deprived them of their votes. They have deprived themselves." The latter view was held by the very substantial majority.

The meeting then elected the President-elect (Mr. C. W. Taylor, of Sheffield) and the Honorary Secretary as A.A.L. representatives on the L.A. Council during 1953, and appointed its representatives on various L.A. committees: Education (O. S. Tomlinson, F.L.A.), Publications (A. C. Jones, F.L.A.), and Membership (W. F. Broome, F.L.A.). The last two are, of course, the Honorary Editor and Honorary Membership Secretary, but it is perhaps a good idea to remind ourselves of their names from time to time.

The Greater London Division submitted to Council their comments on the implications of the Bournemouth

NOTES

Annual General Meeting of the Library Association, and their suggestions for a draft policy. Whilst many members of the Council felt that to deal with the document immediately would lead to inadequate and perhaps hasty decisions, it was realised that the L.A. Council might issue to Branches and Sections a document designed as a basis for discussion at local annual general meetings in January, and it was felt that unless there was some discussion, the A.A.L. representatives would be attending the L.A. Council later in the month unaware of current A.A.L. thought. Therefore, discussion took place with the object of producing an interim policy which could, if necessary, be re-adjusted in the light of any L.A. Council proposals, but which in itself could possibly influence those proposals before they were circulated.

Briefly—and as these are only interim conclusions, it would be unwise to publish them in full—the meeting decided that it could not support any suggestion of student membership, that the annual business meeting should be held at a different time and place from the Conference, and that the possibility of a postal vote on motions of a contentious nature should be considered. It also came down quite clearly on the side of a sliding scale of subscriptions based on salary, and expressed the view that the income from institutional membership was not proportionate to the many services rendered to those institutions. Although the Library Association finances are of immediate importance, it believed that consideration of certain other points was urgently required, and that adequate proposals should accompany the necessary suggestions for increased subscriptions. These points included ensuring a greater proportion of nationally elected representatives on the L.A. Council; a more informative reporting of L.A. Council business; and better planning of the Annual

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Conference to allow more informed discussion and the possibility of effective action. It was agreed also to remind the L.A. Council that capita- tion grants are the life-blood of much of the essential work of the Association and economies in this sphere are to be deprecated, and should not in any case be made without consideration of the service being given in return. On educational matters, the Council welcomed the establishment of moderating committees and such local committees as the Standing Committee on Education in Librarianship in the London Region, and hoped that these committees were an indication of further co-operation between examining and teaching bodies. Categorical opposition to any increase in examination fees appeared to be unanimous. Constructive views on L.A. public relations were also expressed and have been forwarded to the Library Association.

The Education and Library Committee had, with reluctance, decided that they were compelled by rising costs to increase the fee for each Correspondence Course by half-a-crown. They had also discussed the Entrance Examination, upon which the A.A.L. is one of the bodies making representations in high places.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee considered our own financial position, which is causing much concern, and they eventually approved the Honorary Treasurer's proposed estimates. When their minutes were

presented, the Council instructed the Committee to give further consideration to the question of annual opting for Section membership.

Normally, when the reports have been approved there is a feeling that the Council is entering the straight, but on this occasion there were several hurdles ahead. The G.L.D. Committee had presented certain suggestions aimed at improving the means of negotiation available to librarians, and the Council appointed a committee to consider the question. This, of course, is a most important problem. The East Midland Division were quick off the mark in inviting the Association to hold the week-end conference within their area in 1954. This year's election had already been dealt with earlier in the meeting, but a motion in the broadest possible terms, to give all members of the Association "full voting rights" in the future was now considered, and was decisively defeated. It is possible, however, that certain specific proposals may come to either the Council or the Annual General Meeting in the future. After some discussion about the date of the next Council meeting, not yet fixed, the President thanked members for their attendance during the year and in saying good-bye to those not returning, paid particular tribute to the Immediate Past President, Mr. Clough. On behalf of the Council, Mr. Parsonage, who is Chairman of the Council, thanked the President for his services.

W.T.

A.A.L. CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

Students are reminded that completed application forms, together with the appropriate fees, for the courses beginning in March and April, must reach Mrs. L. Martin, Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, London, S.E.24, on or before February 28th, 1953, after which date no application will be considered. Earlier receipt is advisable and would be greatly appreciated.

Full particulars of the courses offered are given in the *Students' Handbook* for 1953. Special attention is drawn to the introduction of two new courses, covering the Registration D (viib) and (viic) sections of the syllabus.

Revision Courses. A limited number of *Registration* and *Final* courses are available to run from March to June, 1953. These short period courses are reserved exclusively for those students who have already sat the examinations in the subjects required.

Fees. The fee per course is £2 7s. 6d., plus 5s. extra to students in Africa, America, Asia and Australasia.

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LETTERS FROM MEMBERS

THE L.A. LIBRARY

MANY part-time students of librarianship are, I venture to suggest, handicapped in their professional studies by the fact that our own Library at Chaucer House closes at the early hour of 6 p.m. every evening. This applies particularly to those of us who have no access to "staff" libraries, and consequently have to rely on the hospitality of public libraries, which are often unwilling or unable to lend their text-books to others than members of their own staff. (This, of course, being a reasonable attitude if stocks are low). The only other choice left would be to buy our own books—a costly proposition for any student. (Library schools and Polytechnics, as well as the N.C.L., can only help in a limited way).

If a sufficient number of members of the A.A.L. experience this difficulty, perhaps the power-that-be at Chaucer House could be prevailed upon to lengthen the hours of opening (at least 2 or 3 times a week), and thus give those of us in full-time employment in non-public libraries the benefit of its valuable collection.

En passant, it might not be out of place to mention that the Librarian of the L.A. has often bemoaned the fact that not enough use is made of the Library. Is this perhaps due to its being closed just at the time when most of us would wish to study and use its reading facilities? And what about the complaints of lecturers and examiners, who time and again tell us to read and study not only the standard text-books, but also stress the vital importance of reading "round the subject."

Perhaps both these problems could be partly solved by the L.A. Library becoming more accessible to those who need it most.

MISS R. LEHMANN,
Assistant, Jews College Library,
W.C.I.

LIBRARY LITERATURE

THE AUTHORS of the article "Abstracts and library science," in your issue for May, 1952, cannot be regular users of *Library Literature*. It is simply untrue to say that it does not pretend to be an abstracting service, or that it is an index only. From 1933-1942 it called itself "an author and subject index-digest." "In general, a descriptive note or brief summary is used for articles in periodicals of wide circulation and digests are made for those in periodicals of more limited circulation, particularly for those in foreign languages"—from the preface to the volume for 1933-1935. The title of the latest volume (1952) includes the words "with abstracts."

Articles in Dutch, German, Polish and Russian are abstracted fully and regularly. For quality of abstracts and fullness of treatment, compare the treatment in *Library Literature* and in *Library Science Abstracts* of those two articles:—

(1) Tauber, M. F. Investigations and research projects in the field of college libraries. *College and research libraries*, 11: 321-27, Oct., 1950.

(2) Zimmermann, E. Die Bibliothekarische Behandlung von Mikrofilmen. *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen*, 64: 91-100 March-April, 1950.

I claim that *Library Literature* is slightly better in each abstract. In the first, it does not take refuge in the vague "... etc." of *LSA*'s abstracts; in the second it gives more detail of format of film.

LSA is good, perhaps indispensable. Faced with the possibility of having to drop it, I said I would buy it personally if our official subscription ceased; but we should be fair to the magnificent and still unequalled 20-year-old service of the American publication.

F. A. SANDALL,
Librarian, University College,
Auckland, N.Z.

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